***Brave New World*** notes

The Novel

* Published in 1932 (just before the rise of Hitler and Stalin); critics called it a “novel of ideas” in which Huxley had more interest in ideas than plot or characters
* Novel is a work of **satire**: writing that exposes and criticizes foolishness and faults of society. The purpose of satire is to entertain, but also to correct the flaws it points out.
  + Uses his characters to satirize and voice opinion on: the way progress in science affects people; the pursuit of happiness; religion; division of labor in society; love; passion; and freedom
* Novel is also utopian/dystopian fiction. **Utopia:** an ideal community or society. **Dystopia:** a community in a repressive and controlled state, often under the guise of being a utopia.
  + Huxley creates a fictional world about 500 years into the future (AD 2540 A.D. or, in the novel, 632 A.F. [Ford’s Model T first came out in 1908]). The central story takes place in London.
  + Huxley creates a world where everyone is superficially happy, and yet this is a dystopian world. This world enjoys external, materialistic, and sensual happiness, but has lost the internal happiness that comes from passions, intellectual interests, and spirituality. *In creating such a world, he calls into question just what and how we define “happiness”.*
  + Huxley also explores the potential abuse of genetic (humans are bred in an assembly line manner into specific physical/mental/social roles: Alphas, Betas, Deltas, Gammas, and Epsilons) and psychological engineering (humans are conditioned and brainwashed using “hypnopaedia”)

The Author: Aldous Huxley

* Born 1894. Grew up in London, England.
  + Much of his family was highly educated. Grandfather and brother were top biologists, and his half-brother, Andrew Huxley, won the Nobel Prize in 1963 for his work in physiology. Aldous was trained in medicine, the arts, and science. He was considered a prodigy, both intelligent and creative.
  + Many tragedies in Huxley’s life, however. His mother died from cancer when Huxley was 14, and he nearly lost his eyesight due to illness as a teenager. He did not fight in WWI or pursue a scientific career due to his failing vision, and instead pursued a career in writing.
  + In the last ten years of his life he experimented with mysticism, parapsychology, and hallucinogenic drugs—experiences he wrote of in *The Doors of Perception* (1954). In 1960, Huxley was diagnosed with cancer (same disease that killed his mother), and eventually died in Los Angeles on November 22, 1963: the same day JFK was assassinated.